

**Oral Statement**

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STATEMENT OF  
VADM CHARLES L. MUNNS  
COMMANDER NAVAL SUBMARINE FORCES  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PROJECTION FORCES  
ON  
THE NUCLEAR SUBMARINE FORCE – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE  
13 JUNE 2005

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Projection Forces, I am Vice Admiral Charles Munns, Commander Naval Submarine Forces. I want to express my gratitude on behalf of the men and women of your Navy for holding these hearings. It is a privilege for us to be here today. I have a detailed written statement for the record I can read, but I am also prepared to summarize that in a shorter oral summary if you would prefer.

I probably have an uncommon perspective, having spent 12 years underwater. And from that perspective, I believe undersea warfare is not well understood by most of the public. Therefore we appreciate the opportunity today to tell our story. My remarks will be unclassified, however we would be delighted to present classified details to the committee at a future time.

I'll briefly describe 1) the strategic landscape, 2) the health of the force, 3) the product and value we produce, and then 4) suggest a few future capabilities.

## **I. The Global Strategic Landscape**

**Strategic Challenges.** First, America is a Nation at war against Terrorism. Secondly we live on an ever-changing landscape and it will evolve in uncertain directions over time. Our task is to positively influence both terrorist enemies and this fluctuating political landscape. We must certainly win the battles and wars we face – but even better is to act to prevent the conflict – or if conflict comes to shape it to our terms. This is the world in which your submarine force operates, this is our mission. We do it icw other elements of US power, the Intelligence community, the combatant commands, and the Navy. We do this clandestinely with mobility, and persistence in the troubled littorals of our world and we do it far away from our shores.

**II. Health of the Submarine Force** – Having given a

glimpse of what we must do today and into the future, let me now report on our readiness today.

Our nation has the best submarine force in the world and in all of history. We have built upon a strong legacy of selecting and training the best people, building and maintaining the best ships, and equipping them with the latest technology. This recipe has helped us win our Nations conflicts and wars for 105 years.

Our people are the cornerstone of our Force. They are talented, they are motivated, and they have chosen to serve their Nation in a submarine. They are better educated today than in the past . Submariners feel a sense of purpose. They are out on the front line everyday, they know what they do is important. Each is imbued with the legacy of Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, that “Excellence is Standard”.

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The ships we operate are not only the most capable in the world, but they are cost effective as well. These nuclear powered ships are launched with a full tank of gas that lasts for the life of the ship.

We are innovators. In the late 1990's we embarked on an effort to replace our legacy sonar systems with Acoustic-Rapid Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) Insertion (ARCI). COTS enabled us to upgrade our software and hardware every few years at a fraction of the cost required to replace our legacy system. This effort has been so successful, we have expanded it to our tactical fire control, radio room, electronic surveillance equipment, navigation, periscope, and torpedoes.

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We are fully ready to win in combat with the Joint Force.

However, submarines also produce real value day-in and day-out. In 2004, we deployed 27 submarines throughout the world on lengthy operational deployments. The rest of the SSN Force was either in deep maintenance or getting ready to deploy this year. These submarines provided a product.

Additionally, the preponderance of our SSBN force is underway, underwater, in a completely survivable posture, and ready to respond to the Presidents tasking. Submarines supported every regional Combatant Commander along with Strategic Command and Special Operations Command.

Submarines were sent where they were needed most and transited the North Pole, Cape of Good Hope, Panama Canal, and Suez Canal to get there. Our Submarine Force is doing our Nation's work every single day.

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But while the submarine force is robust today its future cannot be taken for granted. What keeps me awake at night is ensuring our ability to keep doing this in the future. The last QDR specified a minimum force level of 55 SSNs necessary to fill Combatant Commanders' high priority needs. Other studies continue today to refine the numbers. Possibly the best yardstick is the Combatant Commander deployment requests, which exceeds what we can provide with the current Force. The problem however, is that the current VIRGINIA Class SSN build rate will take us well below any of these levels. We are actively working to make the VIRGINIA SSN build rate more economical to make the Future Force more affordable.

Our ability to build enough submarines each year to maintain this level will require a national shipbuilding, design and maintenance infrastructure strategy. This is one of our Nation's crown jewels and it will take all of our attention.

**III. The SSN Value Chain** – I’ve described the world we should expect and our readiness – let me now comment on our product and the value of what we do.

Enabled by nuclear power, submarines stealthily and persistently go where others cannot. We operate in shallow water, under ice, and in congested areas and in extreme weather conditions. We stay on station a long time. The five attributes, which enable submarines to deliver unique value to our Nation are:

Stealth

Persistence

Agility

Mobility

Payload



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The Submarine Force provides value across the spectrum of conflict. On one end are 'Phase Zero' operations. These are operations to shape the environment and prevent conflict or set conditions to engage conflict on our terms. At the other end of the spectrum are combat operations. I'll discuss the later first.

During combat operations, submarines can conduct theater strike and/or Global Strike with kinetic and non-kinetic weapons precisely on targets – torpedoes, cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, special forces and information operation effects. These are our more common and understood effects. I won't belabor them.

Let me shift to the more important, more sensitive, and less understood piece. I call it Phase 0 operations. Phase Zero operations are knowledge gathering, shaping, or combat preparation operations. Phase Zero is not just the day before

conflict. It is not just a single mission. It is the work done day-in and day-out, year-in and year-out by many ships to better understand the global strategic environment. The ultimate goal of phase Zero is to ensure United States national interests are achieved. To do it without combat, if possible and if combat is required that we can strike out from a landscape and an environment that we understand.

A vivid example of this is the Cold War. Soviet's uncertainty regarding our submarines' location, deployed force strength and capability resulted in strategic effects. These effects were achieved over 40 years by working day-in and day-out in places where others could not go to understand the environment and the adversary that others could not see. Likewise, today we are engaged in Phase 0 operations for terrorist cells, drug rings and a number of other potential Nation State competitors. We do this by going to places and in a posture that others cannot.

In each of these areas the formula is the same, to “walk the field” so we understand them, influence their course if needed and be ready to respond with confidence should deterrence and shaping fail.

I have thus far discussed what we do and how we do it. Let me now mention the effects. I’ll discuss four:

Equipment design

Tactics

Planning

Decision-making

First, the design of our equipment we take to the world’s hostile littorals, is a direct result of submarines operating day-in and day-out in these environments. We collect all spectrum information, which is used by our scientists to design equipment to work in and exploit this **REAL** environment.

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This develops better sensors, processors, weapons, and defenses. By these actions our Submarine Force is more capable but so too is the Navy, Department of Defense, and other government agencies.

Secondly, we develop new tactics based on our experiences. These allow us to thrive in the littoral and for the maritime joint forces continued access for combat.

A related benefit is that we operate in the same areas where we could potentially fight. We are constantly honing our skills and sharing the lessons learned across the fleet.

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Third, the information we collect feeds directly into Combatant Commanders' deliberate planning process. The knowledge we provide of terrorists or of potential enemy capability and intent enables the warfighters to develop executable plans. It's no wonder Combatant Commanders are collectively asking for many submarine missions. They currently want 150% times the "critical" mission days that we can provide.

And fourth, at the highest levels of our government, decision makers utilize the information we gather, among other sources, to aid in determining "ground truth". This ultimately leads to strategic direction for our Nation's security.

I prefaced this section with submarine attributes, which in combination enable unique capability: stealth, persistence, agility, mobility, and payload. As we make decisions about the future of the Submarine Force, we need to preserve these attributes. They should be the primary criteria upon which we evaluate the adequacy of any new design.

#### **IV. Needed Future Capabilities**

Now turning to the future... If you permit me to dream a bit I would opine that the capability this Nation needs is defined by a sufficient number of submarine hulls each with attributes described in the previous section and with some increased capability for:

Enhanced connectivity and

Utilization of distributed sensors and weapons

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We are working to provide submarines with communications at higher speeds and increased depth.

We also want to make better use of the new payload volume we have for stealthily delivered sensors and weapons. We already have the SSGN, the SEAWOLF class and VIRGINIA coming online with large payload volumes and ocean interfaces. We are experimenting with this payload volume to deliver unique, enhanced capability.

I envision one of the payload sets to be knowledge and shaping tools. These will include networks of distributed sensors and weapons, which allow us to better understand and affect a larger area. Whether they are sensors, unmanned or manned vehicles, non-kinetic weapons, or kinetic weapons, they will inherit the submarine's unique attributes of: stealth, persistence, agility, and mobility. And they will reap the same benefits I have discussed today.

And finally, we must continue to improve the sensors installed on our submarines. We have refined the twin thin-line towed array systems on our SURTASS ships and need to transfer this enhanced capability to our submarines.

## **V. Summary**

The Submarine Force should continue to be utilized forward, as scouts “walking the field” in many places. Day-in and day-out, we must conduct Phase Zero operations, grasping for ground truth and shaping the environment to avert the next conflict or should it occur, be ready to engage quickly and decisively on our terms. By making optimum use of the very talented people of the Submarine Force, and taking advantage of fundamental attributes: stealth, persistence, agility, mobility, and payload we will continue to provide our country with an exceptionally unique and powerful capability.

Thank you very much for your time today.